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FM AMEMBASSY PORT AU PRINCE
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8642
INFO RUEHZH/HAITI COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA PRIORITY 2012
RUEHSA/AMEMBASSY PRETORIA PRIORITY 1792
RUEHQU/AMCONSUL QUEBEC PRIORITY 1215
RUMIAAA/HQ USSOUTHCOM J2 MIAMI FL PRIORITY
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 1576

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 PORT AU PRINCE 001106

SIPDIS

STATE FOR WHA/EX AND WHA/CAR
S/CRS
INL FOR KEVIN BROWN AND ANGELIC YOUNG
SOUTHCOM ALSO FOR POLAD
STATE PASS AID FOR LAC/CAR
INR/IAA
WHA/EX PLEASE PASS USOAS

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: PREL PGOV
SUBJECT: EX-SOLDIERS OCCUPY FORMER ARMY GARRISONS,
CHALLENGE GOVERNMENT

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¶11. (SBU) Summary: A group led by former soldiers of the Haitian Armed Forces (FAHD) occupied former military buildings in Cap Haitien (Department of the North) and the border town of Ouanaminthe (Department of the Northeast) for three days beginning July 29. The disgruntled former members of the army dismantled by former President Jean Bertrand Aristide claimed they were excluded from the latest Haitian National Police (HNP) re-integration program and are owed pensions from the government. The occupations provoked counter-demonstrations by Fanmi Lavalas supporters. The Minister of Interior and the Secretary of State for Public Security traveled to the areas and personally negotiated with the protesters. Both protests ended peacefully on July 31. Though ex-FAHD members have periodically raised their concerns in public, individuals close to President Preval speculate that this was a politically manipulated campaign to keep up the pressure on President Preval after the April riots and during the process of selecting a new government. End summary.

¶12. (SBU) More than one hundred ex-FAHD wearing U.S. style army camouflage, stormed into a former Cap-Haitien army garrison /prison (now a music school) July 29 declaring they would not vacate the premises until their needs were addressed by the Haitian government. The ex-soldiers claimed they were not included in the last negotiations between ex-FAHD and the HNP to participate in the police re-integration program. They offered to aid in improving the security situation in the country, particularly with the continuing kidnappings, asserting that the HNP cannot adequately secure the country. They declared that the government still owes them pensions. On the same day, an identical group of uniformed ex-FAHD occupied a former army barracks in Ouanaminthe, on the border with the Dominican Republic. Secretary of State for Public Security Luc Eucher Joseph heard about the standoff just before boarding a plane for a counterdrug meeting in Colombia, and cancelled the trip to manage the situation.

¶13. (SBU) Cap Haitien HNP Chief of Police (Commissar) Johanny Caneus told emboff that on the night of July 30, at least 155 ex-FAHD (including 6 women) continued to occupy the former Cap Haitien army garrison, and that Interior Minister Bien-Aime and ex-FAHD Colonel Jean-Claude Jeudi were engaged

in discussions with them. The Archbishop of Cap Haitien, Monsignor Louis Kebreau, told emboff on July 30 that he witnessed a large crowd of Lavalas party members threatening the protesters inside. UNPOL Contingent Commander and Spokesperson Fred Blaise confirmed this to poloff July 31, saying that on July 30, approximately 400 angry Lavalas party members armed with sticks and stones had surrounded the prison, threatening the ex-soldiers who refused to leave the facility (Note: Lavalas is the party of former President Jean Bertrand Aristide, who disbanded the army in 1995. The concept of re-constituting the army is, for the Lavalas party, walking back the policies implemented by Aristide. End note.) MINUSTAH's primary objective at that point was to keep the two groups separated. Blaise also confirmed that some of the ex-soldiers were armed with handguns.

¶4. (SBU) Blaise told poloff July 31 that the protest ended peacefully on July 30 with the soldiers agreeing to disperse, following nearly 24 hours of negotiations between the ex-soldiers and the delegation led by Minister Bien-Aime and ex-FAHD Colonel Jeudi. Reports of numbers arrested differ. Blaise reported seven arrests, among them an alleged kidnapper and a person carrying an illegal weapon. MINUSTAH Civil Affairs Director Jay Carter reported 6 arrests, that many in the Ouanaminthe group were armed, but that only a few weapons had been found among the group in Cap Haitien. Commissar Caneus reports August 1 that only 38 of 148 persons occupying the Cap Haitian building were ex-FAHD, and that other 110 have all been arrested. The press reported July 31 that the Bien-Aime/Jeudi delegation intends to move from Cap Haitien to Ouanaminthe to deal with the protest there which is still ongoing. Commissar Thomas Hillare in Ouanaminthe reported to Embassy August 1 that the approximately 100 Ouanaminthe ex-military also occupying former military

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barracks, told him they did not want trouble but are waiting for the government's delegation to arrive to tell them when they will receive their pensions. They also conveyed that the school year is coming up, there are school fees to pay and they need to feed their families. MINUSTAH was not called in formally in either location, but did provide troops at the former army garrison in Cap Haitien to maintain security. Blaise confirmed that MINUSTAH believes the protest in Ouanaminthe was coordinated with the action in Cap Haitien.

¶5. (SBU) Patrick Elie, who heads a Presidential commission investigating Haiti's institutional security needs (including whether Haiti needs to reestablish an army) told the press July 31 that he believed this action by former military was a politically-manipulated effort to pressure President Preval in a difficult time when Haiti had been without a government since April and is seeking to confirm a new Prime Minister. Fanmi Lavalas activist in Cap Haitien Nawoom Marcellus told the press the same day he also suspected political forces were behind these ex-military, since they had worn crisp new uniforms and were carrying 'brand new' U.S. currency notes.

¶6. (SBU) Comment: Under the Preval administration, former members of Haiti's disbanded military have maintained underground networks, which MINUSTAH regards as a potential threat and tries to monitor. Occasional protests by ex-FAHD soldiers are not unusual. Their main demands are the reestablishment of Haiti's army, the paying of military pensions and back pay for the years since the military was demobilized, and positions for their members in Haiti's police force. Embassy notes that those ex-FAHD considered acceptable have already been integrated into HNP ranks. These demands are coupled with the fervent but vague assertion that ex-FAHD can play a role in protecting Haiti's security. The occupations in Cap Haitien and Ouanaminthe are the boldest FAHD public forays in some time. Many would agree with Elie that this coordinated effort was designed to keep up the pressure on the President after the April food

riots, notably on the eve of the Senate's vote for Prime Minister Designate Michele Pierre-Louis. (Note: Pierre-Louis was in fact confirmed by the Parliament late on July 31. End note).

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